

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 219
By Henry

A RESOLUTION To name the elevated portion on the south side of the press suite in the Legislative Plaza the "Bill 'Rocky' Rawlins Press Room."

WHEREAS, For 46 years Mr. Bill "Rocky" Rawlins wrote about state government and politics for the Associated Press; the last 42 years of that illustrious career were served in Tennessee and the final 20 years were reported from the State Capitol in Nashville; and

WHEREAS, Bill Rawlins was born in Pleasantville, Iowa; his first newspaper job was as a carrier for the Denver *Rocky Mountain News* in Rawlins, Wyoming; and

WHEREAS, Young Mr. Rawlins was responsible for more than doubling the circulation of the *Rocky Mountain News* in his town, raising it from 100 to 250 subscribers; and

WHEREAS, In 1948, while a student at the University of New Mexico, Bill began working part-time for the Associated Press; he later joined the Associated Press bureau in Albuquerque as a full-time reporter; and

WHEREAS, In 1952, Mr. Rawlins transferred to the AP's Nashville bureau and, a year later, moved to the Knoxville bureau; in 1960 his increasingly recognized journalistic abilities

landed him the job of Associated Press correspondent for Chattanooga, where he received the name "Rocky" in honor of his earliest newspaper job; and

WHEREAS, During his Chattanooga assignment, Rocky covered the jury-tampering trial and conviction of Teamster's boss, Jimmy Hoffa; and

WHEREAS, Bill Rawlins returned to the Nashville bureau in 1964, having been named state editor, a post later designated as news editor in 1971; during the early seventies, he moved to the Capitol office, where his vast knowledge of state government and politics was evident; and

WHEREAS, In one coup, Rocky scooped dozens of national reporters at the 1976 Republican National Convention with the first report that President Gerald Ford had chosen Senator Bob Dole, not Senator Howard Baker, as his running mate; and

WHEREAS, The 1979 removal of then Governor Ray Blanton three days prior to the end of his term was ably covered by Mr. Rawlins; in 1981, he covered Governor Blanton's federal court trial and conviction for selling a state liquor license; and

WHEREAS, The Ninety-Eighth General Assembly, in a resolution commending him for his distinguished career, singled him out as "the only member of the Capitol Hill press corps who is an expert at shorthand, taking notes at such a rapid pace that smoke sometimes seems to rise from his pad and pencil"; he was also acclaimed for his genial host qualities in providing coffee for the entire Capitol Hill press corps from his personal coffee pot; and

WHEREAS, Since his retirement in 1994, Rocky has written a book on Governor Ray Blanton and is in the process of writing another on Governor Ned McWherter; he has also found time to work in his shop and to play bridge as a bridge club member on a regular basis; and

WHEREAS, Bill Rawlins is a committed family man who enjoys the company of his wife, Suzanne, the daughter of former AP Chief of Bureau, Vince Gullette; his children, Drew and Ruth; and his grandchildren, Tyler, Andy and Austin; he evinces his faith as a member of St. David's Episcopal Church; and

WHEREAS, For more than four decades Rocky Rawlins has provided keen insight on state government and politics, and his superb reporting abilities were a hallmark of journalism in this state and a window to the public to the operations on Capitol Hill and, as such, are worthy of special commemoration; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That the elevated portion on the south side of the press suite in the Legislative Plaza be named the "Bill 'Rocky' Rawlins Press Room," as a symbol of respect and affection in which he is held by the state legislators, his professional peers, and thousands of readers who have come to know him and his work over the years.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Facility Administrator for the Legislative complex be directed to erect a suitable sign to designate the elevated portion on the south side of the press suite in the Legislative Plaza as the "Bill 'Rocky' Rawlins Press Room".

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with the final two clauses omitted from such copy, and that an enrolled copy of the resolution be sent to the Facility Administrator for the Legislative complex.